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'The Language of Art and Music: An International Symposium on the Potential for Artistic Expression to Cross Cultural Barriers'

Citation for published version:

Lawson, C 2011, 'The Language of Art and Music: An International Symposium on the Potential for Artistic Expression to Cross Cultural Barriers'. in ICD conference. ICD conference, Berlin, The Language of Art and Music: "An International Symposium on the Potential for Artistic Expression to Cross Cultural Barriers and the Relationship between Art, Culture, and International Relations", Berlin, United Kingdom, 17/02/11.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

ICD conference

Publisher Rights Statement:

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Painting Sound: The Collaborative Work of Musician

Bartosz Dziadosz and Painter Colin Lawson

ICD, Berlin 17th - 20th February 2011

Author: Colin Lawson, artist and lecturer in Drawing and Painting at Edinburgh College of Art, The University of Edinburgh. Website: www.colinlawson.net Email: colinlawsonpainting@gmail.com

Abstract: This presentation will screen and discuss two digital animations made collaboratively by British painter Colin Lawson and Polish musician Bartosz Dziadosz. These artists work together to create work which unites abstract painting with experimental music. The presentation will discuss how the animations are constructed, what they hope to achieve and how the digital medium allows two artists from different countries to collaborate and disseminate work without ever meeting in person.

Presentation: My painting is primarily influenced by my fascination with ambient music. From the early experiments of John Cage through to Brian Eno and contemporary experimental music, I have been searching to find what might be considered a visual equivalent of this remarkable discipline. It is not my intention to illustrate this music. My painted compositions are informed by responses to repeated notes and subtle variations in texture; the gradual introduction of stronger rhythms and the smaller, hidden sounds which surface periodically.

In 2009 I began experimenting with the digital medium as a means of directly linking my paintings to the music and sound works that informed them. The following is an animation made with music by Bartosz Dziadosz (known as Pleq):

Screening One: *The Butterfly*

2010, single channel digital animation with sound, 4 minutes 40 seconds, music by Bartosz Dziadosz, VU-US, paintings & animations by Colin Lawson.

Screened through a digital projector linked to DVD player or a laptop.

Preview Viewing: to preview this work please go to the following URL:

<http://vimeo.com/17186504>

I met Bartosz through MySpace and *The Butterfly* is our second collaboration. The creation process was initiated when Bartosz sent me an audio file of the music you just heard. Painting in response to this, I made three works (oil on paper, 30 x 21 cm). The rhythm and timbre of the

music informed the composition and colour of the paintings. It also informed the varied surface textures unique to each painting. These surfaces were constructed through a process of layering and scraping paint. It is these surfaces which were primarily manipulated in the animation process.

The animation process is essentially very simple. When the paintings are complete they are scanned and imported into Adobe Photoshop. Working with the filters and tools present in this program, I manipulate the images to emphasise or obscure specific parts of each painting. The resulting images are then animated with Photoshop to evolve and transform in response to changes present in the music. This visual evolution is slow; changes in texture and colour are not immediately identifiable. Each change is made to highlight aural changes that might otherwise go unnoticed; the rough grain in a line of scumbled paint will reflect the shifting rhythm of a percussive beat. The aim is to emphasise the acts of viewing and listening in an attempt to entrance and intrigue the spectator.

Although the creation process relies heavily on physical painting, the final work is purely digital. This means Bartosz and I can screen the work in the gallery spaces or music venues where we live and upload it for viewing through various internet forums. It also means that when *The Butterfly* was selected to screen at the SIMULTAN arts festival in Timisoara, Romania in October 2010, it could be saved as a high resolution file on DVD and posted to the festival organizers.

Bartosz and I continue to collaborate and I would like to finish the presentation with a screening of our most recent animation *Swell Bliss* which we completed in December 2010. This animation is constructed from four paintings (oil on paper, 30 x 21 cm) I made in response to music by Bartosz.

Screening Two: *Swell Bliss*

2010, single channel digital animation with sound, 4 minutes 55 seconds, music by Bartosz Dziadosz, paintings & animations by Colin Lawson.

Screened through a digital projector linked to DVD player or a laptop.

Preview Viewing: to preview this work please go to the following URL:

<http://vimeo.com/17468783>